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Town Manager

TOWN OF
WATERTOWN
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**Town Manager’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update
April 24, 2020**

COVID-19 Numbers

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is reporting that as of April 23, 2020 there are:

- 46,023 cases statewide
- 10,724 Middlesex County
- 2,360 deaths statewide

For more state data, visit www.mass.gov/coronavirus.

Watertown has a total of 186 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 51 community members have recovered from the virus. Four Town employees have had confirmed cases. Two of those employees are back to work. Watertown has recorded nine COVID-19 fatalities. Our thoughts go out to the families as they mourn the loss of their loved one.

Watertown COVID-19 Case age Distribution

19 and Under	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and over	Unknown/no age recorded	Total
5	24	37	29	28	28	35		186

Watertown COVID-19 Resource Guide

The Watertown Free Public Library has developed a COVID-19 resource guide for Watertown residents. The guide will be updated frequently. www.watertownlib.org/covid19guide

How will you find out about local emergencies?

To get Emergency Alerts from the Town of Watertown text WATERTOWNMA to 888-777. Your cell phone number will be in the system without having to establish an Everbridge account. You also have the opportunity to add your email address into the system at this time. You would then receive all emails and/or texts from the system. If you already have an Everbridge account, this is not necessary, as you will continue to receive the notifications sent by the Town.

Watertown COVID-19 Informational Call Center and Email

For general COVID-19 questions not specific to the Town of Watertown, all Massachusetts residents are encouraged to call the State's **2-1-1 Hotline** that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone or use the live chat option on the **Mass 2-1-1 website (mass211.org)**.

The Town of Watertown has established a COVID-19 informational call center to allow residents and business owners to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Watertown. The call center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm and the number for the call center is **# 617-972-6565**. Questions can also be emailed to **COVID19@police.watertown-ma.gov**.

Please call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.

Calls should not be made to 9-1-1 for questions regarding COVID-19.

Four (4) electronic sign boards have been placed around Town with the message: "Stay safe, stay home". Further message updates will be provided as needed.

Face Coverings and Cloth Masks Advisory

The Baker-Polito Administration issued guidance to residents and Executive Branch employees recommending the use of a face covering or cloth mask when in situations where maintaining proper social distancing measures are not possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as in a grocery store. A face covering may include anything that covers your nose and mouth, including a mask, scarf or bandana. Health care masks, such as N95 masks, should not be used and should be preserved for health care workers and first responders. Cloth masks should not be worn by young children under the age of two, persons with difficulty breathing, or those who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Instructions on how to make a cloth mask are available from the CDC [here](#). [Read the guidance here](#).

Tweet from Watertown Police

Watertown Police (@WatertownPD) tweeted at 8:43 AM on Fri, Apr 17, 2020:

Please watch this very easy way to make a homemade mask. Protect yourself and others by wearing one in public places. 😊 #stayhome #StaySafe

(<https://twitter.com/WatertownPD/status/1251129053664419846?s=09>)

Get the official Twitter app at <https://twitter.com/download?s=13>

Watertown Memorial Day Parade Cancellation

Out of an abundance of caution, the Town has made the decision **to cancel this year's Memorial Day Parade**. Patrick George, the Veterans' Services Officer, is coordinating with Veterans Organizations and other key stakeholders to identify alternate ways to appropriately honor the holiday and the Veterans who have lost their lives. Contingency plans for Memorial Flags and Memorial Wreaths are also being worked on. If you have any questions, please contact Patrick George at (617) 972-6416, (781) 645-9127, pgeorge@watertown-ma.gov.

Mutual Aid Network Established for Volunteers and Those in Need

The Watertown Mutual Aid Network has been established and is funded by the Watertown Community Foundation in association with Wayside Youth & Family Support Network Multi-Service Center. By following [this link](#), you will find information about how to use mutual aid, links to forms to offer help and request aid from your Watertown neighbors, and additional resources. We hope that most community members would use the online format, but understand that some people might feel more comfortable

working with a person. Please reach out to Sophia, the Community Coordinator at Sophia_Suarez-Friedman@WaysideYouth.org or 617-744-9585, if you have any questions or if you wish to offer help or request aid over the phone instead (translation services are available). We hope that this resource will bring our community together during this difficult time.

Funds available for Watertown Residents in need

There are funds available for emergency needs from Wayside, Council on Aging and Springwell. Marshall Home Fund provides funds to each of these agencies to assist Watertown residents in need age 55 and older. Limited grants are available for home heating, car repair, computer repair, dental work, home repair, and other emergency items. The telephone numbers for each agency is as follows:

Springwell	(617) 926-4100
Wayside	(617) 744-9585
Council on Aging	(617) 972-6490

Disaster Recovery Information

On March 27, the President [declared](#) a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Through this declaration, federal aid will be made available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits in all Massachusetts counties to help pay for emergency protective measures (response costs) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MEMA's Recovery Unit has developed a [website](#) with information and guidance regarding the disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process.

CARES Act Unemployment Benefits For Self-Employed, Gig Economy, and Other Workers ([News Release](#))

On April 20th, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that Massachusetts residents who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits can now apply online for the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

The new federal PUA program provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits to those who are unable to work because of a COVID-19-related reason but are not eligible for regular or extended unemployment benefits. This includes self-employed workers, independent contractors, gig economy workers, and those with limited work history. Applicants can learn more and apply at www.mass.gov/pua.

Eviction and Foreclosure Protections

Governor Baker signed legislation into law to protect homeowners and tenants from eviction and foreclosure. *An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 emergency* ensures housing stability for residents and families, and can be read in its entirety [here](#).

SBA Small Business Paycheck Protection Program

The SBA has put out the following information for small businesses related to both funding opportunities and technical assistance related to ongoing programs being offered to help businesses deal with the impacts of the COVID 19 response. Read Press Release [here](#).

Multi-State Initiative to Provide Relief to Massachusetts Student Loan Borrowers ([News Release](#))

The Massachusetts Division of Banks (DOB) has joined a multi-state initiative to secure payment relief options for Massachusetts student loan borrowers and issued a **Consumer Advisory** with important information and resources for private student loan borrowers. Through this initiative, DOB has secured relief options with 15 private student loan servicers to expand on the protections the federal government granted to federal student loan borrowers. These new options stand to benefit over 182,000 Massachusetts

borrowers with privately held student loans. This response builds on the federal CARES Act, which provided much needed relief for students with federal loans, including the suspension of monthly payments, interest and involuntary collection activity until September 30, 2020, as well as the **recently announced** Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's deferment of payments in its No-Interest Loan Program until August 1, 2020.

Schools and Non-Emergency Child Care Programs ([Read the News Release](#))

On April 21st, Governor Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020 in an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

- This order expands the [March 25](#) order suspending normal educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) established a process to approve [Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs](#) to serve families of first responders, medical personnel and essential workers.
- Emergency Child Care programs approved by EEC will continue operating. Currently there are 523 emergency child care programs statewide serving families of essential workers. Weekly attendance averages about 2,500 children in these programs across the Commonwealth.
- EEC will continue to pay subsidies to child care providers based on their pre-COVID-19 enrollment, in order to support the workforce.
- The order does not apply to residential special education schools.

Read the Orders here: [K-12 School Order Link](#) | [Child Care Program Link](#)

Watertown Public Schools

Watertown Public Schools will continue to support students, staff members, and parents through its robust Extended Learning Plan through June 16 as Governor Charlie Baker announced that all school buildings in Massachusetts will be closed for the remainder of this school year. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will release guidance to districts shortly and the District will make any necessary adjustments to ensure that our students continue moving forward through the end of the school year. With this announcement, the School Department continues to plan for keeping our students and staff healthy when school buildings reopen and to ensure that we meet all of our children where they are academically once the Extended Learning Plan comes to an end.

The School Nutrition Department continues to provide Grab n Go meals to any student who could benefit from this service on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the WHS parking lot from 11am to 1pm. They are currently serving meals to 200+ students.

COVID-19 Public Resources Map

MEMA, together with MA VOAD and other partners, has developed a [COVID-19 Public Resources Map](#) showing the location of resources available to the public, such as food banks, houses of worship, and Project Bread site locations. Please note that this map is not inclusive of all resources, and is only as accurate as the information that has been provided to MEMA.

New DPH Daily Dashboard Released

On April 20th, the Baker-Polito Administration released an enhanced, comprehensive and detailed COVID-19 data report, including trend data in a variety of areas. The new daily dashboard is 23 pages in length and includes information on cases rates, testing, and breakdowns by age, sex, race and ethnicity, and geography of confirmed cases. It also includes a similar breakdown of death data. Beyond the case data, the report also includes specific information on COVID-19 hospital census information, a list of nursing homes, skilled

nursing facilities and rest homes with known clusters of COVID-19 cases and data on PPE distribution by recipient type and geography. ([See the new Daily Dashboard report](#))

Update on Mobile Testing Program for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and DDS Group Homes

On March 31, the Commonwealth implemented a project that allows for safe, on-site testing of residents of nursing and rest homes with a quick turnaround. The program has expanded and can now test both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents and staff at nursing homes, rest homes, Assisted Living Residences, and Department of Developmental Services group homes. Facilities with clinical capacity can also order test kits to perform themselves. The program operates under the auspices of the Massachusetts National Guard, in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Broad Institute of Cambridge, See a summary below of activity since the launch of the program.

Update on Mobile Testing Numbers for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and EOHHS Group Homes & Sites (as of 4/23)

Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/22	1672	17
Total (as of 4/22)	11,796	341

Mobile Testing at EOHHS Group Homes & Care Sites (as of 4/23)

DDS, DMH, DCF and DPH Facilities	
Clients	3219
Staff	3710
Total Tests	6,929
Number of Locations	407

Cases in Long term Care Facilities (as of 4/23)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	8,435
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	283
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	1,316

Check Your Symptoms for COVID-19 Online

The state is reminding people that they can now check their symptoms for COVID-19 online through [Buoy.com/mass](https://buoy.com/mass). Buoy's online tool is not to be used in place of emergency medical care. If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911 or visit the nearest emergency room. Massachusetts residents can visit Buoy to get advice from an online health assistant safely at home, for free. Buoy will connect you with the appropriate health care resource based on your symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19.

Hospitals Urge People Experiencing Medical Emergencies to Seek Care

Boston-area hospitals are urging residents who are experiencing emergency illnesses other than COVID-19 to seek appropriate medical care. Hospitals have seen a decrease in residents seeking treatment for medical issues like heart attacks, strokes and injuries as people are concerned about contracting COVID-19.

Hospitals have launched a Public Service Announcement (PSA) encouraging residents to seek care and assuring patients that Emergency Rooms are clean and safe. Watch the [PSA](#).

Health Department

The Health Department has created a portal for COVID-19 Information : COVID-19 Resource Center where all COVID-19 related information will be posted:

<https://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/978/COVID-19-Resource-Center>

Watertown Free Public Library

The Watertown Free Public Library will **remain closed until Monday, May 4th**. New virtual programs are added regularly. View the events calendar at watertownlib.org/events. Subscribe to the enewsletter for weekly updates during the closure watertownlib.org/newsletter.

The COVID-19 community resource guide is available at www.watertownlib.org/covid19guide.

New resource alert: The Library has added two new streaming services to their elibrary. Qello provides full length concerts and music documentaries. Acorn TV offers streaming British tv, movies, and miniseries. For more information visit watertownlib.org/elibrary.

Watertown Council on Aging/Senior Center/Food Pantry

The Watertown Council on Aging/Senior Center will **remain closed for all programs and services** including all activities, exercise classes, AARP tax appointments, SHINE counseling, podiatry and blood pressure clinics, shuttle bus runs and Senior Parking Permits **until Monday, May 4th**. The Watertown Food Pantry continues to be open **Tuesdays, 10 AM until 2 PM** at 80 Mt. Auburn Street, rear. **When going to the Food Pantry, please wear a mask or other face covering to protect your own self and those around you in the parking lot and at the Food Pantry.** See above for links about masks and other face coverings. Food donations are accepted at the Food Pantry on Tuesdays starting at 9:00 AM until 2 PM. Senior Center staff are available to answer your questions and to help connect you to resources you may need. Call the Senior Center at (617) 972-6490 or send an e-mail to SeniorCenter@watertown-ma.gov.

Watertown Veterans' Services

Watertown Veterans' Services is closed to the public but is still available to assist with administering and applying for benefits. Families and Veterans may reach out to inquire about applying for benefits.

Watertown Veterans' Services, in partnership with the Greater Boston Veterans' Collaborative has a detailed spreadsheet with benefits and services—including but not limited to: financial, mental health, transportation, and food resources— available to Veterans and others during this pandemic. The list is constantly being updated and interested Veterans and families should contact Patrick George, Veterans' Services Officer (VSO) for the most up to date list. Please contact the VSO at: PGGeorge@watertown-ma.gov or (617) 972-6416 (Office) and (781) 645-9127 (Cell)

[COVID-19 Resource Guide](#)

Parks and Recreation

All programs offered by the Watertown Recreation Department will **remain cancelled until Monday, May 4th**. **All fields, courts, track, tot lots and dog parks in Watertown will remain closed until May 4th**. Please adhere to this request and follow all guidelines by the Watertown Health Department and all governmental agencies.

Town Hall will remain closed to the public until Monday, May 4th. Town Hall and the Department of Public Works Administrative Offices remain available only by phone or online. All calls and emails will be responded to Monday through Friday 8:30am-5:00pm.

[Visit the Department directory for phone numbers.](#)

This includes the following Town Offices:

- Town Manager, TownMgr@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6465
- Health Department, Health@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6446
- Senior Center, SeniorCenter@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6490
- Recreation Office, Recreation@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6494
- DPW Administrative, DPW1@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 617-972-6420
- Inspectional Services, buildinginspector@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6480
- Treasurer/Collector, Treas&Collectors@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6450
- Assessor, Assessor@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6410
- Town Clerk/Vital Records, TownClerks@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6486
- Veterans Services, PGeorge@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6416

Emergency Management Team

The Town of Watertown Emergency Management Team is meeting daily to monitor the developments in the outbreak of the coronavirus. We have used these meetings to keep an organized flow of information and to develop strategies to best respond to the needs of our community. We will continue to update the community through the Watertown Health Department's web page.

<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/965/CORONAVIRUS>.

Please continue to take the following actions to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay safe, stay home
- Practice social distancing – when in public spaces try to remain at least 6-feet away from others.
- Stay home if you are sick – and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth – when you cough or sneeze use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands – with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizing gel.

We also recommend the following resources:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Resource Page:

<https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Town Manager's Coronavirus (COVID-19) (7) [Statements/Updates](#)

We are in this together

We are living in an unprecedented time where our world, our nation and our community, is faced with the threat of an international pandemic known as COVID-19.

All of our Town employees are incredibly committed to ensuring the Town can safely meet the needs of our community while we are also protecting our employees' safety. All departments have implemented vigorous social distancing and hygiene protocols. I am so grateful for all of our employees' efforts under difficult circumstances.

The members of the Honorable Town Council continue to be available to help all residents and to provide updates/information to protect the health and safety of all the residents of Watertown.

I want to thank all of the members of our community for your cooperation and efforts to date; and for your continued actions to limit the spread of COVID-19. **Additionally, please check on your neighbors who may live alone. If you have any concerns, please email us at COVID19@police.watertown-ma.gov or call the Police Department at (617) 972-6500; and we will follow up.**

Watertown is a resilient community and we are all in this together. We will continue to support each other and stay strong, Watertown Strong!